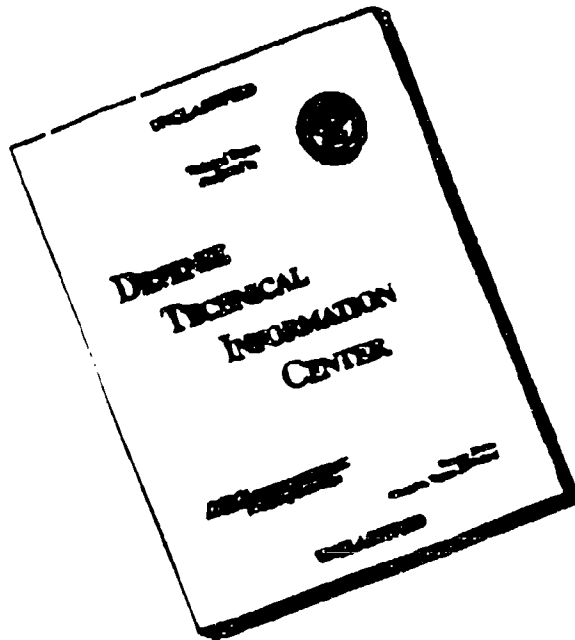


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RM-4172-ISA
SEPTEMBER 1964

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IN MALAYA, 1948-1964

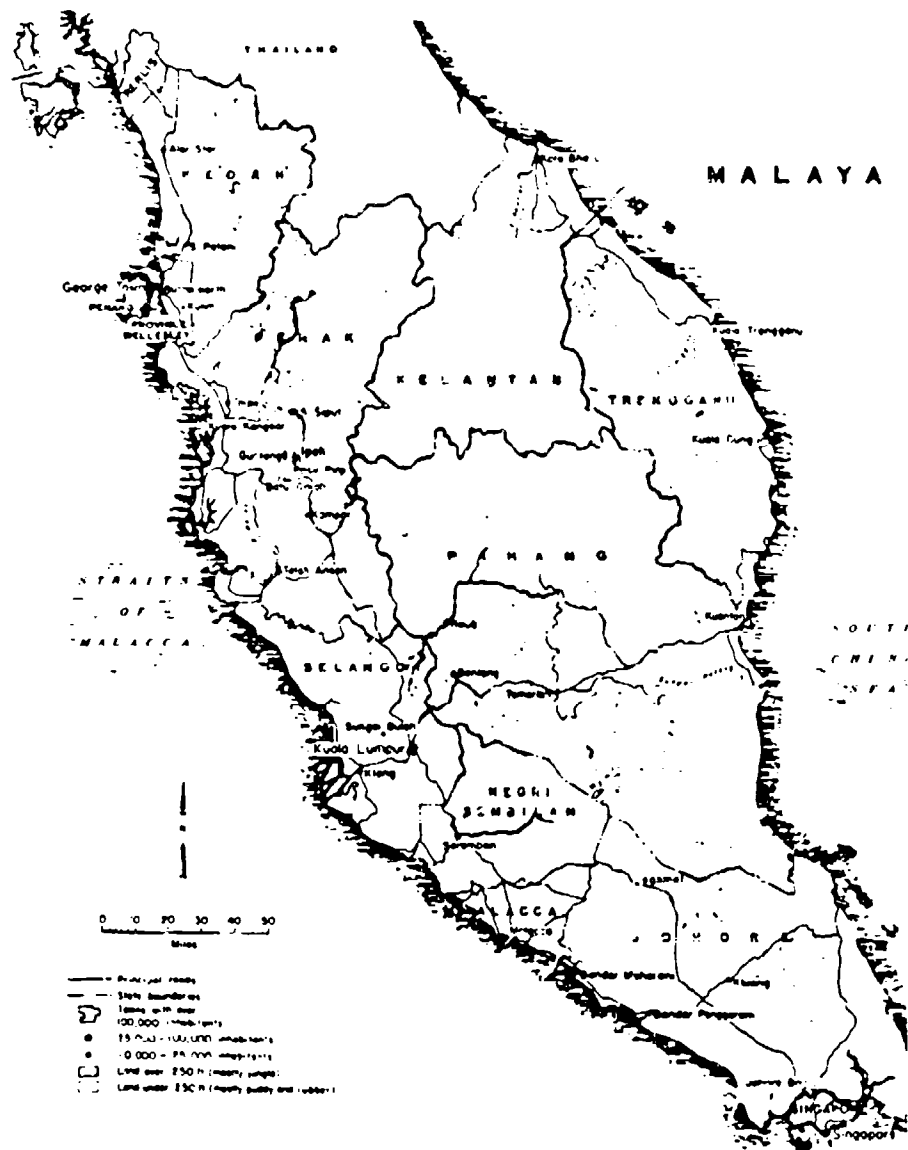
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RM-4172-ISA
SEPTEMBER 1964

ANTIGUERRILLA INTELLIGENCE
IN MALAYA, 1948-1964

Riley Sund

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RM-4172-ISA
SEPTEMBER 1964

ANTIGUERRILLA INTELLIGENCE
IN MALAYA, 1948-1960 (U)

Riley Sunderland

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PREFACE

The research for this Memorandum was sponsored by the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense, International Security Affairs. The RM is the third in a series of five, which cover different aspects of the British campaign against the communist terrorists in Malaya between 1947 and 1960. RM-4170-ISA, Army Operations in Malaya, 1947-1960(U), which appeared earlier this month, dealt with the military side of the campaign, thus providing the background for the subsequent, more specialized analyses. RM-4171-ISA, Organizing Counterinsurgency in Malaya, 1947-1960(U), gave a detailed description of the organization of antiterrorist activities at all levels of administration. The present study, on the development of effective methods of counterinsurgent intelligence, will be followed shortly by RM-4173-ISA, Resettlement and Food Control in Malaya(U), and RM-4174-ISA, Winning the Hearts and Minds of the People--Malaya, 1948-1960(U).

The papers in this series are independent treatments of separate topics, which together form a comprehensive picture, for it was the combination and interaction of the practices and policies described in all five that defeated the Communists. The studies do not, however,

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constitute a history of the Malaya campaign; the chief aim throughout is to discern and evaluate the methods used by the British.

For the bulk of his information, the author is indebted to the War Office and other British government archives, where, between April and November 1962, he was generously given access to records of the Emergency. Although the files of the Police Special Branch, the center of all intelligence activity during most of the campaign, were not available to him, he obtained valuable data and insights from Mr. John H. Morton, who had been Field Marshal Templer's Director of Intelligence. The author interviewed Mr. Morton in London, as he did a number of other British and Australian participants in the Malaya campaign, whose contributions are acknowledged individually in the footnotes. He has also drawn on the regimental records and professional journals of the British army. In this country, the author has used relevant classified materials in the custody of the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence (U.S. Army), and the Research Analysis Corporation.

Though the majority of written sources cited in this Memorandum are secret, titles and descriptive subject headings are unclassified throughout.

SUMMARY

In 1948, the year the British declared the Emergency in Malaya that was to last until 1960, intelligence on the communist terrorists and their sympathizers was haphazard, uncoordinated, and poorly used. By the late 1950's, Special Branch (the department of the police that had been given sole responsibility for the collection, evaluation, and dissemination of intelligence) knew the names, locations, and unit assignments of most guerrillas and could identify about one out of two guerrillas encountered. In 1957, the Director of Operations' ten-year report on the Emergency stated that the majority of contacts between soldiers and terrorists that resulted in a guerrilla's death or capture were directly attributable to good intelligence. This achievement reflects several important changes in the intervening years: a growing understanding of the peculiar nature and uses of counter-insurgent intelligence; the improved skills, organization, and procedures of the defenders; and the greater willingness of the populace to part with information.

Initially, the government was severely handicapped in its efforts to penetrate the insurgents' organization and ascertain their plans. The Chinese Communist

terrorists found shelter among the large Chinese element (38 per cent of the total population), the more easily so as many Chinese lived as squatters on the jungle fringe, and thus outside the framework of Malaya's social and governmental institutions, and few administrators and police officials spoke their language. Both police and military were engaged in the gathering and distribution of intelligence, but they differed considerably in their approaches, and in the early months owed their few successes largely to accident or to the carelessness and inexperience of the guerrillas. The police, although theoretically directing the counterinsurgent effort, with the military acting only in its support, was not yet capable of assuming control and had neither the staff nor the skill needed to produce usable intelligence.

With the realization of these shortcomings came the beginnings of reform. Field Marshal Sir Gerald W. R. Templer, who assumed the combined post of High Commissioner and Director of Operations early in 1952 and received sweeping grant of powers with this unique assignment, was able to build and improve on the efforts of the outgoing Director of Operations, Lt. Gen. Sir Harold Briggs. In the ensuing reorganization and consolidation of the

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counterinsurgent effort, intelligence was given the place of paramount importance, and the chief aim of all counterinsurgent activity in Malaya, including military operations, was defined as the penetration of the guerrilla organization. Police Special Branch became the center for the coordination and processing of all intelligence. It was staffed and equipped in accordance with this mission. It collected, evaluated, and disseminated information on the enemy; received, and often employed, surrendered and captured guerrillas; recruited agents; and served as the repository of captured documents. Military units continued to collect information in fields peculiarly their own (through aerial photography, visual reconnaissance from light aircraft, and patrolling), passing on to Special Branch any raw information they acquired, and retaining for the direct use of the troops only combat intelligence of immediate importance.

Over the years, Special Branch became increasingly adept at a great variety of methods and devices through which to subvert the guerrillas, and its agents ultimately worked their way into the highest levels of the Communist Party. The large-scale resettlement of Chinese squatters in fenced and policed villages, which permitted the

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surveillance and ambushing of the supply lines between guerrillas and sympathizers, resulted in a rising number of guerrilla casualties and captures. Moreover, it helped swing popular support away from the guerrillas and to the side of the authorities, as people realized the benefits of government protection and welfare programs -- a development which, in turn, facilitated the recruitment of reliable counterinsurgent agents. Covert operations, including the use of faked documents and the simulation of guerrilla activity in various guises, became more and more sophisticated with time. As for military operations, their avowed purpose in the latter years of the Emergency was to improve intelligence on the enemy in a given area, and it was thus possible for a major operation to be regarded as a success even if few guerrillas were killed and captured in its course. This was demonstrated in Operation JAYA in Northern Malaya (October 1959 - June 1960), which is described in some detail in this Memorandum.

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I. THE LARGER CONTEXT

According to the staff that helped direct the anti-guerrilla effort in Malaya, the great majority of those contacts between Security Forces and terrorists that resulted in the killing or capture of guerrillas were due to good intelligence.¹ This achievement reflects the capabilities of the Police Special Branch, which were built up over a period of years and benefited greatly by improved procedures and arrangements in other aspects of the fight against the guerrilla.

In the first years of the Emergency, which had begun in 1948, the Commonwealth armed forces in Malaya proved themselves able to operate effectively in the jungle that covered 80 per cent of the peninsula, and thus to prevent the guerrillas from forming large regular units capable of waging large-scale war. This defensive success of the Security Forces won the government time in which to resettle scattered subsistence and truck farmers by moving them into villages of about 1,000 each. Their resettlement, which took place between 1950 and 1952, in turn permitted

¹Director of Operations, Malaya, Review of the Emergency in Malaya from June 1948 to August 1957 (hereafter, Report on 1948-1957). p. 27, SECRET.

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control of the movement of food, drugs, and supplies, as well as of individuals, from the new villages to the guerrillas in the jungle. Parties of guerrillas and sympathizers who undertook such movement now had to run the gantlet of Security Force ambushes along the paths between village and jungle. The terrorists' attempts to organize the supply effort provided targets for police agents and informers. If the guerrillas' task in Malaya ultimately became a hopeless one, this was due to the interaction of several of the Security Forces' assets: combat success in the jungle; population control and improved security through resettlement; an efficient system of command and control; and growing pressure on the guerrillas as a result of public information and welfare programs that won popular support for the government, and of ever-better intelligence about the enemy.

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II. THE EARLY INTELLIGENCE REPORTS

The administration, armed forces, and police of the Federation of Malaya that sought to establish itself after World War II operated in a country where no inhabited spot was more than a few hours' walk from the jungle. Along the jungle fringe, some 500,000 Chinese squatters, who had settled there during the war, kept themselves outside the structure of Malaya's society. Jungle in which lawless men could shelter (banditry had long been endemic in certain areas of Malaya)² and the fact that half a million people were living outside the administrative framework aggravated the problems of the Federation government, which never knew precisely what was happening in the jungle and among the squatters.

The disorder following on the Japanese occupation of Malaya in World War II introduced still another problem, as the militant Communist Party of Malaya applied its doctrine, techniques, and organization to exploiting the opportunities presented by the combination of jungle, squatters, and postwar confusion. A conspiracy led by professional revolutionaries, the party also devoted

²Interview with Mr. Richard West, former district officer in Malaya, London, 1962.

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considerable ingenuity and effort to misleading police and government. Its great advantage was the fact that its membership was about 95 per cent Chinese, whereas the police force in 1947-1948 was almost entirely Malay, except for a few British senior officers and 228 Chinese members. The Federation's armed services and public administration staffs also came largely from non-Chinese communities. The serious language problem that resulted from this situation was compounded by the Chinese' self-chosen isolation; although they numbered about 38 per cent of the population of Malaya, they conducted themselves as an alien community.³

Here, then, were the elements of the intelligence problem: the jungle, the squatters, the large and semi-isolated Chinese minority, a strong and disciplined

³Interview with Mr. John H. Morton, London, 1962. Morton, who was Director of Intelligence for Field Marshal Sir Gerald W. R. Templer when Templer was Director of Operations, thought that the Chinese were an alien community in Malaya. The data on Chinese representation on the staffs of the public administration in Malaya are taken from the 1947 census figures published in M. V. del Tufo, Malaya, Comprising the Federation of Malaya and the Colony of Singapore: A Report on the 1947 Census, London, 1949. For a more detailed examination of the Malayan scene in 1947-1948 see R. Sunderland, Army Operations in Malaya, 1947-1960(U), The RAND Corporation, RM-4170-ISA, September 1964, SECRET.

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communist conspiracy, and police and soldiers unable, for the most part, to speak the language of those they were supposed to control.

In May and early June 1948, the Malayan Communist Party made a series of attacks on life and property, and then began to mobilize for war.⁴ Its armed strength at that time was about 12,000 equipped, trained, and uniformed guerrillas, who were organized in numbered regiments, companies, and independent platoons. The party had long studied the problem of guerrilla war and had adopted the doctrines of Mao Tse-tung, which called for the Communists to base themselves on the simple people of the countryside. In the given situation, this meant that Chinese guerrillas took shelter among Chinese squatters on the jungle fringe.⁵

The government, therefore, found it difficult to obtain reliable intelligence on the guerrillas, who often

⁴Guerrilla diaries captured in northern Malaya stated that what their writers called "operations" began in May 1948. By mid-June, the government felt compelled to declare an Emergency. Shortly thereafter, the Security Forces learned that the guerrillas were in the process of mobilizing their armed forces, and that the target date for completion of the mobilization and the launching of an offensive was September. The diaries are discussed in Hq North Malaya Sub-District, Weekly ISUM No. 11, September 14, 1948, SECRET. For a contemporary mention of the mobilization see Weekly ISUM No. 3, July 19, 1948, SECRET.

⁵Interview with Morton.

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were able to disappear quickly into the jungle or to merge with their compatriots. The intelligence reports of 1948-1951 are an illustration of bad intelligence in guerrilla war.

The senior ground-force headquarters in the Far East was Headquarters Far East Land Forces (FARFLF). Its secret intelligence reviews on Malaya in 1948-1949 never spoke of individual guerrillas and rarely mentioned units; they referred simply to "bandits" and "bandit gangs." The intelligence section apparently kept a careful record of all Security Force contacts with the guerrillas, of guerrilla attacks on life and property, of police and army casualties, of guerrilla casualties, and of the location of all these encounters and other episodes. From these, it tried to identify trends. The fact that it recorded almost no order-of-battle information on the guerrillas and no information from within the guerrilla forces would imply, therefore, that it did not possess either.

Headquarters Malaya District was the next command level, comparable in its responsibilities to a division headquarters. Its intelligence reports showed an interesting fluctuation: initially informative and useful, they were far less so by late 1948, a development that would seem to

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reflect improvement in the leadership of the guerrilla forces.

Between May and September 1948, the guerrilla leadership may be said to have eased the task of the Security Forces by a number of serious mistakes. (1) It appeared to have provoked a strong reaction from the government with a series of outrages and only then to have sought to mobilize its forces. (2) Many of its supporters among the civilian population carried on their persons membership cards of party organizations, receipts for contributions, and communist propaganda literature. (3) Though the Malayan Communist Party and its military organization consisted almost entirely of Chinese, and though the populace of the predominantly Malay country traditionally had no love for the Chinese, the Communists at first apparently took no pains to conceal their activities from the rural Malays (perhaps in the belief that these Malays were part of the masses among whom the guerrillas would operate), and, as a result, the government received a good deal of information on the terrorists. The guerrillas' underestimate of the Security Forces, their carelessness with personal papers, and the acuity and hostility of the rural Malays are reflected in the weekly intelligence summaries of

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Malaya District for July and August 1948. However, this kind of information, though it was useful and permitted the Security Forces to thwart the guerrillas' attempts to form bases, was only low-level operational intelligence. In September 1948, the army's senior officers admitted that, while they had a mass of that kind of intelligence, they knew nothing of the guerrillas' higher organization and control nor of the identity of their commanders.⁶

The guerrilla leaders may have blundered in their early operations, but they were clever and determined men, who learned from their mistakes and corrected them, except for their continued inability to win the support of the Malays. The initial operations of the Security Forces had had the unsought effect of weeding out the fools and sluggards among the guerrillas and their supporters. Also, they had the great advantage, in the early years, of having virtually no personnel turnover. The experienced British combat soldier left when his battalion was transferred; the staff officer at brigade and higher levels did his

⁶Hq Malaya District, Weekly ISUMs for the period, SECRET; Minutes of the Commander-in-Chief's Conference of September 21-22, issued September 28, 1948, CR/INJELF/5565/C(Ops), SECRET; Sunderland, Army Operations, p. 131. The Communists seem initially to have grossly underestimated the competence and energy of their opponents.

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tour and went home. But the guerrilla stayed on, and came to have more experience than his opposite number.

These facts, as well as the terrorists' other assets mentioned earlier, are reflected in the intelligence reports of 1949-1951. The Malaya District review for January 20, 1949, for example, mentions what it calls "bandit gangs" near Batu Arang, Bahau/Rompin, and also on the Kedah/Perlis frontier. This is the extent of their identification and the sum total of information on the enemy. The section in the same review dealing with events in the several Malayan states contains a recapitulation of the week's happenings and a few translations of interesting documents captured from the guerrillas. A reader would find it hard to gather from this secret publication that the Security Forces were fighting an elaborately organized guerrilla force, with numbered regiments, companies, and independent platoons, territorial assignments, and a sophisticated command structure.

The consequences of this lack of intelligence were painfully apparent in the field, for the data on which the infantry battalions operated were no better than the intelligence that higher headquarters had. Looking back on Operation SICKLE, in December 1948, the commander of a Gurkha battalion wrote:

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Contrary to what one might expect, there was no information about anything in the area on the day the operation was due to start apart from the generally-accepted fact that the haystack did contain a needle or two; then, to carry the simile a little further, the only thing to do was to disturb the hay and hope at least to get our fingers pricked.

His summary statement on the situation was: "There is no 'intelligence' worth the name...."⁷

Another battalion commander, writing in 1950, recorded that the Security Forces lacked not only intelligence -- which has been defined as "evaluated and interpreted information concerning an actual or possible enemy or area of operations (including weather and terrain), together with the conclusions drawn therefrom"⁸ -- but also important information on the land and people of their areas of operation. As for the land, the maps they were using were editions of 1943 and 1944 showing neither jungle tracks nor small villages; the available aerial photographs were some eighteen months out of date; and the only information

⁷Appendix C to "Quarterly Historical Report," 1st Battalion, 2nd King Edward VII's Own Gurkha Rifles, December 31, 1948, SECRET.

⁸Department of the Army, Dictionary of United States Army Terms, November 1953, p. 151.

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on the Chinese squatters used in 1950 was taken from the 1947 census. With regard to the people, the commander observed that he did not know how the guerrillas obtained their food; which of the shops were guerrilla contact centers; who among the casual visitors to towns and villages were guerrilla agents; and which schoolteachers were teaching communism.

This lack of information, he reported, was hampering the program of issuing personal registration cards, which had been instituted so that the Security Forces might know with whom they were dealing. As it was, rubber tappers would come into town to request new cards (to replace those that they claimed had been stolen from them by the guerrillas), and the Security Forces would issue them readily and, the commander thought, indiscriminately.⁹

Another document of this same battalion, without seeking to make the point, also proved how little the Security Forces knew of their opponents in the early days of the Emergency. To provide the full-time guerrilla with food, supplies, recruits, and information, the Malayan

⁹Appendix A to "Quarterly Historical Report," 1st Battalion, the Devonshire Regiment, March 31, 1950, SECRET.

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Communist Party had organized the Min Chong Yuen T'ung (People's Movement), commonly known as the Min Yuen. Living in the squatter settlements as well as in the established villages and small towns, its members were the guerrillas' service force and logistical support. They walked back and forth with food, drugs, information, and the like, and direct contact with the guerrilla was an essential part of the arrangement. Yet the 1st Battalion of the Devonshire Regiment, though it had been in Malaya since the Emergency began, knew nothing of the Min Yuen until early in 1950.¹⁰

¹⁰"Quarterly Historical Report," 1 Devons, March 31, 1950, SECRET.

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III. EARLY RESPONSES BY THE MILITARY

The response to available information in the military headquarters most directly concerned with operations -- battalion and brigade -- varied with the imagination, skills, and personalities of individuals. In general, headquarters staffs tried to apply the familiar intelligence and operational procedures of World War II. They kept records, looked for patterns, and puzzled over the results. One handicap to their efforts was the small size of the brigade and battalion intelligence sections. The former had one officer, one corporal, and two enlisted men; the latter, one officer, a sergeant, and six enlisted men. And a single brigade might have to operate in several states.¹¹

The success of the different battalions in making the most of this situation varied widely. Unhappily, their performance could not be accurately compared, for lack of police records. Without doubt, however, the 1st Battalion of the Suffolk Regiment was outstanding. At a time when

¹¹Interview with Brig. C.I.V. Jones, MI, who commanded the Central Malaya District early in the Emergency, London, 1962; Minutes of the C-in-C's Conference, FARLEF, September 21-22, 1948, SECRET.

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enemy information in the operations orders of other units was of the vaguest and most general nature (a typical reference being merely to "forty bandits"), the Suffolks' intelligence annexes listed guerrilla forces by units and individuals, and their comments on the enemy were both specific and detailed. In the light of the importance later placed on food-denial operations and food control in general, it is noteworthy that the Suffolks' orders at this early date dealt at length with the guerrillas' food problem. The excellence of the Suffolks' intelligence was attested to by their record in eliminating terrorists. In three years they killed almost two hundred guerrillas, which put them in a class with the outstanding Fijian Regiment and well ahead of the Gurkhas. Moreover, the available scores for the Fijians and the Gurkhas do not permit a fair comparison, for they were made only after the resettlement of squatters, food control, and reform of the intelligence system had greatly improved both the quality and the quantity of the intelligence at the service of the Security Forces.¹² The Suffolks'

¹²"Quarterly Historical Report" and Appendixes, 1st Battalion, the Suffolks, September 30, 1949, December 31, 1949, March 31, 1950, SECRET; "Quarterly Historical Report," 1 Devons, March 31, 1950, SECRET (showing the

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performance shows what could be done, but the records do not show how they did it.

Among the reasons already suggested for the paucity of information were the 500,000 Chinese squatters -- 10 per cent of the entire population -- who lived outside the structure of Malaya's society and thus lacked normal contact with its authorities. Hence, a cooperative squatter (assuming that he existed) who wanted to tell the police of something he had seen or heard would have had to make a considerable journey to the nearest police station, and his absence from the squatter settlement would almost certainly have led to his being questioned upon return.¹³ Moreover, given the small number of Chinese among the police in 1948-1949, he probably would not have found anyone in the police station who spoke his language.

However, the guerrilla, in order to attack, had to leave the world of the squatter and move into the world where the other 90 per cent of Malaya lived. There he had

problems of a good battalion whose commander was interested in intelligence); "25 Field Regiment History, 1 April 1952 - 31 March 1953," Appendix A, SECRET; Director of Operations, Malaya, Annual Report (hereafter, Director's Annual Report), 1954, p. 9, and 1955, p. 10, SECRET.

¹³ "Quarterly Historical Report," 1 Devons, March 31, 1949, SECRET.

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agents and sympathizers, collected his money, and bought his medicines. His movements, his collections, and his purchases, as well as those of his sympathizers, were bound to be noted, thus furnishing the information that would help the soldier and the policeman and simplify their problems.

Looking at the difficulties of getting one's bearings in a situation in which the guerrilla had the initiative, a battalion commander wrote in early 1950 that a great deal of information (as distinct from intelligence) was available. For example,

1. Topographical and population data, obtainable from the Survey and Land Offices and from the staff of the following departments: Lands, Forests, Mines, Census, Labor, Education, Public Works, National Registration, and Game.
2. Information on political leanings, for which, in addition to the above, one might consult: members of the Boy Scouts, Registry of Societies, police jungle squads, military patrols, local dignitaries, village committees, departmental reports and intelligence summaries, and, through screening operations, the population of towns and villages.
3. Information on individuals and their mutual relationships (the latter of great importance in the Asian world) could be sought also from: police organizations (both

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the regular and those improvised for the Emergency); statements of interrogated personnel; and the police Special Branch.

4. Information on a wide variety of military subjects was obtainable from: the Supply Department of the Federation government (data on food movements); planters and miners; police informers and planted agents; the Public Relations Department (on guerrilla propaganda); and any civilians who were prepared to talk.¹⁴

Having listed these sources, some of which were later to become the sole concern of the police Special Branch, the commander remarked that, though there might be a system for collating information at the Federation and state levels, very little of this was being done by the authorities in the area where his battalion was stationed. Available bits and pieces were not put together, and the patrol leader who needed information had to visit some half-dozen people before he took out his patrol.¹⁵ Though one may wonder what the battalion intelligence officer was doing, the commander's report permits no doubt as to the flaw in the counterinsurgent effort, namely, the lack of a well-organized, adequately-manned Special Branch.

¹⁴Ibid., March 31, 1950, Appendix A, SECRET.

¹⁵Ibid.

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Granted that the intelligence problem was difficult under the best of conditions, the difficulty was compounded by the weakness of the organization dealing with it.¹⁶

Since there was no state of war in Malaya, the military, under long-established British practice, was acting only in support of the civil power, and the police were supposedly directing the counterinsurgent effort.¹⁷ As of 1950, however, the police had not yet assumed control, for reasons beyond the scope of this Memorandum. As a result, and for lack of available intelligence, battalions and jungle squads (police acting as infantry) found the enemy mainly by patrolling areas where logic, intuition, and local knowledge suggested to them that guerrillas might be met. Such routine patrols, not major operations, were the best source of kills and captures in the years 1948-1950.¹⁸

¹⁶In April 1950, on taking over as the first Director of Operations, General Briggs noted that he did not have an organization able to sift and distribute important information quickly (Report on 1948-1949, p. 15). In October of that year, he observed that the police intelligence staff could not deal with the slight increase in the flow of information that had taken place in the preceding six months (Lt. Gen. Sir Harold Briggs, KCIE, Report on the Emergency in Malaya [hereafter, Briggs Report], The Government Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1951, p. 42, SECRET).

¹⁷Minutes of the C-in-C's Conference of August 19-20, issued August 23, 1948, CR/FAELF/5565/G(Ops), SECRET.

¹⁸Sunderland, Army Operations, p. 131.

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IV. THE REORGANIZATION OF SPECIAL BRANCH

Early in 1952, the British government sent Field Marshal Sir Gerald W. R. Templer to Malaya to serve as both High Commissioner and Director of Operations. This sweeping grant of powers (whose only precedent was in Ceylon in 1942, when that island seemed menaced by Japanese invasion) gave Templer the means of applying his own views on how to direct the counterinsurgent effort. Looking back on his policies, Templer said later that he had given intelligence first priority, with public information only slightly behind. He compared intelligence and public information to the right and left hands of the boxer.¹⁹

Templer began by changing the nature of the post of the Director of Intelligence. He took away its line functions and made it purely a staff position under the Director of Operations. The new director thus had no executive authority, but he was responsible to the Director of Operations for the coordination and effective operation of all intelligence agencies in Malaya. This meant that the full weight of the offices of High Commissioner and Director of Operations was placed behind him; far more

¹⁹Interview with Field Marshal Sir Gerald W. R. Templer, London, 1962.

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than merely one of several senior officials, he could speak with the voice of the highest authority in Malaya.

The Director of Intelligence was free to inquire into the inner workings of the police and military intelligence organizations, and to recommend changes to the Director of Operations. Police and military intelligence were required to seek his advice and to clear operations with him. The first to hold the post, Mr. John H. Morton, exercised these prerogatives. He later said that Templer had supported him on all issues.²⁰

In Morton, Templer had called on a specialist in intelligence with long experience in the Middle and Far East. From 1930 to 1947, Morton had been a member of the police in the Indian government. From 1949 until he joined Templer's staff as Director of Intelligence, he had been chief of M.I.5 in Singapore.²¹

One of Morton's first observations was the lack of a clear division of effort in the field of intelligence between police and military. As may already have been suggested by the kind of information that was of interest

²⁰ Interview with Morton.

²¹ Idem.

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to the aforementioned battalion commander in 1950 (see pp. 16-17), the military were becoming involved in matters beyond the competence of, say, a battalion intelligence section, yet the police were not producing intelligence that the military could use. At Morton's recommendation, the situation was changed, and functions were clearly defined.

The police Special Branch received the mission of producing intelligence of the guerrillas. They alone could have secret agents, and were to serve as recipient and office of record for nearly all raw information. Only combat intelligence of immediate importance stayed in the hands of the troops. For example, captured documents would be carefully packaged and sent to Special Branch, which alone had the staff to process them. Captured or surrendered enemies normally were sent to Special Branch at once and under such safeguards as to prevent their former comrades' learning of their fate. However, if a man was willing to talk, and if he either spoke English or Malay or could be otherwise understood (for example, by an ex-guerrilla serving as a guide), then the commander would have to decide whether to interrogate him and then act on what he said, or whether to send him

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back to Special Branch. This would be a borderline case for the informed judgment of the responsible soldier. Discovery of a fresh track in the jungle, on the other hand, would be clearly in the military field, and as such would not be referred to Special Branch.²²

In addition, the military continued to produce information in fields that were peculiarly their own. Under the revised arrangements, aerial photography, visual reconnaissance from light aircraft, and patrolling by the army and the police jungle squads (which were functionally military) remained as important as ever, the first two even gaining in emphasis on occasions when the guerrillas sought to break contact. Continuous patrolling of the jungle throughout the year revealed many guerrilla camps, bivouacs, and tracks, and the contacts that resulted from it produced captives, enemy documents, and identifications. In the sense that it would have uncovered any guerrilla attempt to concentrate a really large striking force, it was also an important early-warning device.²³

²²Director of Operations, Malaya, The Conduct of Anti-Terrorist Operations in Malaya, 3rd ed., 1954 (hereafter, ATOM), Chapter XIV, CONFIDENTIAL.

²³Sunderland, Army Operations, pp. 182-197, 222-234.

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The new emphasis on the role of Special Branch was given administrative recognition. Formerly one of the two principal parts of the Criminal Investigation Division (Crime Branch being the other), Special Branch was taken out of CID in 1952 and given its own director.²⁴

In the early days of the Emergency, Special Branch headquarters had been organized on ethnic lines, so that, for example, communist subversion in the Chinese community would have fallen to the Chinese desk and communist subversion among the Indians to another desk. In August 1950, when Special Branch was still part of CID, it had been reorganized on semipolitical lines, with a desk in charge of communism per se and broken down into "external communism," "banditry," "underground communism," and "other manifestations of communism."²⁵ After 1952, this communist desk organization became still more sophisticated and functional. There was now one subsection concerned with the way the Malayan Communist Party operated; another that dealt with the party's military organization;

²⁴ATOM, Chapter XIV; Report on 1948-1957, p. 15; British Operation Research Section, Far East (hereafter, BORS/FE), Memo No. 1/57, CONFIDENTIAL.

²⁵CID Headquarters, Federation Police, "Memorandum on Intelligence," Kuala Lumpur, August 22, 1950, SECRET.

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a third, with subversion among the Malays; still another, with subversion among the Chinese; and so on. Requirements came under the Production Section.²⁶

The need to produce intelligence in a form useful to the army found administrative recognition in the attaching of thirty military intelligence officers to Special Branch (see below, p. 27), whose mission it was to collect operational intelligence, process it, and pass it on to the army.²⁷

Morton and Templer were fortunate in having inherited the fruits of an earlier attempt to improve Special Branch. Templer's predecessor, Lt. General Sir Harold Briggs, though handicapped by the fact that he had far less authority than Templer, had begun to procure the needed staff for Special Branch. Indeed, the ten-year report published by the Director of Operations' staff in 1957 stated that, from August 1951 on, Special Branch was adequately manned. Morton, therefore, was free to concern himself largely with the proper management of its resources.²⁸

²⁶ Interview with Morton.

²⁷ Director's Annual Report, 1954, p. 15.

²⁸ Report on 1948-1957, p. 15.

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This improved Special Branch took its place in a comprehensive intelligence system designed to give timely and usable information to the fighters in search of guerrillas. The importance of its contribution may be judged by a statement in the aforementioned Director of Operations' report to the effect that the great majority of contacts resulting in the elimination of terrorists had been brought about by Special Branch.²⁹

²⁹Ibid., p. 27.

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V. THE INTELLIGENCE ORGANIZATION³⁰

At the top of the organization was the Director of Intelligence. He coordinated the activities of all intelligence agencies, supervised the collation, evaluation, and dissemination of intelligence, and advised the Director of Operations on intelligence matters.

Advising and assisting the Director was the Combined Intelligence Staff, with representatives of the Malayan Civil Service, the police, the military, and the RAF. It collated information and produced appreciations for the Director of Operations.

The Federal Intelligence Committee was designed to provide a free flow of intelligence among the principal departments of the Federation government and also between the Federation authorities and military intelligence in London, and to permit these interested parties to monitor the workings of intelligence in the Emergency. Composed of representatives of the police, the armed services, the psychological warfare section of the Department of Information, the Secretariat for Chinese Affairs, the

³⁰This is a composite picture of the period 1956-1960. Except as otherwise indicated, it is based on BORS/FE, Memo No. 1/57; "Operational Standing Orders for the Emergency" in "Commander's Diary," 28 Commonwealth Brigade, March 1960, SECRET; ATOM, p. XIV-1.

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Labor Department, and Security Intelligence Far East, the committee had no policymaking functions, but it could offer recommendations.

Police Special Branch advised the government on subversion and produced operational intelligence for the Security Forces.

The link between these civil intelligence agencies and the army was provided by thirty Special Military Intelligence Officers (Special MIOs) attached to Special Branch. Experience had long demonstrated the need for trained and experienced military intelligence specialists to work closely with the police as both liaison officers and expeditors. Even before the Emergency began, senior army headquarters understood that, in a civil emergency, police and military would have to cooperate to the fullest, with the police guiding the combined effort and instructing the army. When the Emergency began, they issued orders accordingly. But it became evident that more than orders was needed to produce effective cooperation. Police and military saw and spoke in different terms. The military, if one may run the risk of oversimplifying, wanted to be told that n guerrillas of such and such a unit would be at a designated place at a

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designated time. The police were prepared to report that a certain man or group of men might visit a given spot "some night soon." They were not trained to, and did not, produce the kind of intelligence that the army could use, and their reporting system was often slow.³¹

The solution to the problem was to attach to Special Branch at its various levels the thirty Special MIOs, who undertook to collect operational intelligence as it passed through Special Branch channels, to process it in a form useful to the military, and to see that it reached the army in time for operations. The transmission went through a chain of command and control that was unique.

In Malaya, the control and conduct of operations was in the hands of the war executive committees. Each of the nine Malayan states and two British colonies had its State War Executive Committee, known as SWEC, and each of the seventy-one local districts had a District War Executive Committee, or DWEC. These committees invariably included the senior members of the police, military, and

³¹R. Sunderland, Organizing Counterinsurgency in Malaya, 1947-1960(U), The RAND Corporation, RM-4771-ISA, September 1964, pp. 19-21, SECRET; Appendix A to "Quarterly Historical Report," 1 Devons, March 31, 1950, SECRET; "Quarterly Historical Report," Hq Malaya District, March 31, 1950, SECRET; interview with Morton.

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civil authorities in their respective areas. The presence of the senior policeman put them in the Special Branch intelligence channel. Their operations rooms, which were run by operations/intelligence staffs, were the mechanism for the operational display and use of Special Branch intelligence.

At state and district levels, the intelligence sections of brigades and battalions, respectively, combined with police staff to man operations rooms. The battalion intelligence officer normally was his commander's operational staff officer. The growing efficiency of Special Branch and the work of the Special MIOs did not reduce his role to that of a passive functionary. Given the fact that the Emergency was fought by small units and that rifle companies had no intelligence sections, the battalion intelligence officer had to support the men in the jungle. He thus had to work out the battalion's future intelligence requirements, and to do so well in advance of operations, so that Special Branch could furnish him the items of intelligence that his commander would need to carry out his mission.

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VI. THE DOCTRINE³²

The major effort of intelligence was directed toward building up the order of battle of the Malayan Communist Party and its military organization. Since the individual party member, the lone terrorist, was capable of causing appreciable damage, Special Branch sought to have the order of battle include every individual by name, as well as by unit and area. To be able to chart this order of battle, Special Branch penetrated the communist organization.

Intelligence was thought so important that John H. Morton, as Templer's Director of Intelligence, established the principle that penetration of the communist structure was the primary mission of the Security Forces in the conduct of counterinsurgency operations in Malaya. All operations, including the military, were laid on to deeper penetration. A simple example of this, and of its effects at the local level, would be an operation designed to drive guerrillas into an area in which Special Branch had established its agents. Another example would be the

³²Except as otherwise indicated, the information under this heading is based on the author's interview with John H. Morton.

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food-denial operation,³³ which might well succeed in removing most of the guerrillas from the area in which it was carried out. In either case, the total of surrenders, kills, and captures would be impressive; the lifting of food and curfew restrictions would be the result most evident and welcome to the inhabitants of the area; and those outside the inner circle would hail the local success as a step toward the end of the Emergency.

At the highest level, the success of an operation was likely to be judged chiefly by the number of surrendered or captured Communists who agreed to go back to the guerrillas as agents of Special Branch to help penetrate the communist organization. The deeper and wider the penetration, so the reasoning went, the more difficult it would be for the guerrillas to operate, and, ultimately, the structure would collapse in mass surrenders. Therefore, the covert aim of Security Force operations was to make the individual change sides. Hunger and despair were to be the catalysts in the conversion process.

³³A food-denial operation was the imposition of rigid food controls and the deployment of additional police and military in the area from which the local guerrillas drew their food. About twenty police and soldiers were needed for each guerrilla. Once the guerrillas had used up their food stocks, they and their sympathizers would have to run serious risks in smuggling food from the fenced-in new villages of the resettled squatters into the jungle. (See Sunderland, Army Operations, p. 141.)

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To persuade surrendered and captured Communists to join the other side, it was essential to have a political theme as background for interrogation and discussion. In Malaya, the theme was Greater Malaysia. It was used to convince the individual captive and potential convert that he could realize his nationalist ideals by working for the government. The same theme was then used also by those SEPs (surrendered enemy personnel) who agreed to return to the jungle and try to win over their ex-comrades.

After weighing the possible results of investing intelligence resources in psychological warfare against those of an equivalent investment in intelligence, Morton chose to invest in intelligence. He argued that psychological warfare based on intelligence resources was expensive in effort and uncertain in its results and that the simpler approach was the better. In making this choice, Morton was aware of the considerable range of possibilities for psychological warfare. For example, since Special Branch had acquired the ability to counterfeit the flow of information within the Malayan Communist Party, and because it took the leadership of the Party an appreciable length of time to learn of a surrender, it had theoretically become possible for a high-ranking

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ex-guerrilla, with technical assistance by Special Branch experts, effectively to imitate a functioning guerrilla headquarters. Such headquarters could then, among other things, have simulated dissension within the Party. But the responses to such an expensive effort were unpredictable, and Morton therefore thought the project inadvisable.

If the necessary SEPs were available, much better and surer results, in Morton's opinion, could be obtained within the more familiar range of operations, which extended from simply using the SEP as a guide to a guerrilla camp, to sending him back as a functioning Special Branch agent, whose mission, in turn, could range from mere information-gathering to persuading others to defect.

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VII. OPENING CHANNELS FOR COMMUNICATION

The isolation of the Chinese squatter community and the conspiratorial nature of the communist movement have been noted earlier (p. 3) as factors in the intelligence problem. To be able to communicate with both the squatters and the conspirators was an essential preliminary to solving the problem.

To bring them into the framework of Malayan society and its administrative controls, the squatters were resettled in 410 villages of about a thousand inhabitants each. Along with resettlement officers, they were given policemen, nurses, postmen, schoolteachers, and the other fundamentals of civilized community living. The program began in 1950 and was completed in 1952, at a cost (in U.S. currency) of \$19,800,000. Soon after its completion, village elections were held as a first step toward popular participation in government.

Resettlement, in John Morton's view, succeeded in establishing the desired contact with the Chinese squatters. Once they were enclosed in fenced new villages, the police could control the movement of people in and out and be on hand to receive information and to observe. Information also flowed from the government to the people through a

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government-sponsored vernacular press, a public-address radio system, and mobile movie trucks. Finally, the new villages permitted a direct and forceful approach to the gathering of information.

For example, on March 26, 1952, near the village of Tanjong Malim on the Perak/Selangor border, a guerrilla ambush killed twelve. This followed on a long series of major incidents in the area. Field Marshal Sir Gerald W. R. Templer, then Director of Operations, personally intervened. He put the village on a twenty-two-hour curfew. After its people had had thirteen days in which to experience the discomfort and inconvenience of staying in their houses twenty-two hours a day and to meditate on the government's display of will and power, Templer had the police distribute questionnaires from house to house. Some time was allowed; then the police returned with sealed boxes, into which each family dropped its anonymous sheet of paper. Arrests as a result of this action began on April 8. On April 26, acting on information, the 1st Battalion of the Suffolk Regiment killed Long Pin, a notorious terror³⁴.

³⁴C. Northcote Parkinson, Templer in Malaya, Donald Moore, Ltd., Singapore, 1954, p. 25.

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Throughout the government, a variety of measures were taken in the fields of administration and public relations to bridge the gulf between the Federation of Malaya and the 38 per cent of its people who were of Chinese extraction. A number of Sinologists were hired to bolster the administration's departments of Chinese Affairs,³⁵ both state and federal. A growing number of Chinese were admitted to the public service, which in many ways had theretofore been a Malay preserve. A Federation Regiment, open to all communities (as against the Malay Regiment, with its restrictive title), was organized. Conscription was used to bring more Chinese into the police. The definition of Malayan citizenship was so broadened that 1,100,000 Chinese became full-fledged citizens. Templer's successor as Director of Operations, General Sir Geoffrey Bourne, later recalled having spent a great deal of his time talking to leaders of the Chinese community and persuading them to commit themselves to the government because the government would win. Finally, the Federation government instituted the Home Guard and made service in it compulsory, in the belief that the Chinese in the given

³⁵ Interview with Morton.

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situation would willingly respond so long as they were able to tell the guerrillas, "We are being forced to support the government."³⁶

To make contact with the guerrilla movement, the Security Forces relied primarily on SEPs working with the standard techniques of psychological warfare. The reasons cited by guerrillas for their leaving the movement (see Table 1) are significant, for they suggest what a government might do to force or persuade insurgents to put themselves in a position in which the counterinsurgents could hope to turn them into active adherents.

In the period before resettlement made food control possible, that is, between 1949 and the latter part of 1951, "dislike of communist policy" and "internal friction" were the principal reasons that men left the guerrilla movement. With the introduction of food control and the steady attrition of those who disliked communist policy and communist leadership, those earlier reasons for surrender virtually disappeared. Instead, "hunger" and "a sense of hopelessness" each came to be mentioned by about one-third of those surrendering and were to remain near that level. Both could be ascribed to military pressure.

³⁶Interview with General Sir Geoffrey K. Bourne, London, 1962; Director's Annual Report, 1954; Briggs Report, p. 36.

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Table 1

REASONS FOR SURRENDERING AS CITED BY SEPs³⁷

Date	Dislike of Policy %	Internal Friction %	Hopeless- ness %	Impulse %	Hunger %
1949- 1951	58.3	20.9	20.9	15.8	0.0
1952	51.2	14.7	12.2	41.4	26.8
Jan- June 1953	38.8	20.8	29.6	34.0	25.0
Jul- Dec 1953	19.7	35.0	21.7	21.1	24.9
Jan- Mar 1954	18.7	16.2	25.4	41.4	26.0
Apr- Jun 1954	13.8	17.3	31.1	68.0	35.6
Jul- Sep 1954	8.3	19.5	33.3	50.4	16.7
Oct- Dec 1954	5.1	7.7	25.7	64.0	36.0
Jan- Feb 1955	0.0	14.3	35.6	85.5	28.5

³⁷ BORS/FE, Memo No. 6/55, pp. 6-9, SECRET.

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Over the six years 1949-1954, the decisive reasons for surrender, as mentioned by the SEPs, were: hunger (cited by 24.8% of all SEPs); dislike of leaders (23.3%); hope of good treatment by the government (22.4%); and opportunity (20.1%).³⁸ The importance of the hunger motive is obvious, the more so as the 24.8 per cent of respondents who cited it were concentrated in the four years after the imposition of food control in late 1950. Under the heading "impulse" may be found the impact of psychological war. From 1953 on, about half the SEPs consistently said that government information had played a big part in their decision to surrender. One may assume that hunger and hopelessness made the guerrilla increasingly receptive to the leaflet, the broadcast, or someone's statement to the effect that the government would treat him well if he came out of the jungle. They were continuing pressures that made him more and more willing to listen to the messages of SEPs urging him to leave the jungle and devote his life to building a better Malaya.³⁹

³⁸BORS/FE, Memo No. 11/54, p. 5, SECRET.

³⁹ibid., p. 45. However, Morton thought of hunger and hopelessness as catalysts.

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As for the absolute numbers involved, 1,877 guerrillas surrendered and 1,221 were captured from the beginning of the Emergency to December 31, 1956.⁴⁰

⁴⁰Federation of Malaya, Annual Report, 1956.

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VIII. THE TREATMENT OF SURRENDERED AND CAPTURED GUERRILLAS

The treatment of surrendered and captured guerrillas by the government and the Security Forces seems to have been based on recognition of the fact that the SEP, and to some extent also the prisoner, having chosen not to fight to the death, had taken a long step toward leaving the communist movement. Their own awareness of this was not unlike that of the Japanese soldier in World War II, who often gave the impression that letting himself be captured was equivalent to joining the Allied forces.

Because work with the SEPs came under the larger heading of intelligence in Malaya, they were handled by the police. The guerrilla who wanted to surrender was unlikely to run into a soldier, since army patrols stressed mobility, secrecy, silence, and surprise, and patrol bases depended on concealment for their protection. Of necessity, therefore, he had to find either a policeman or a civilian who could guide him to one. When the surrender was accepted, a carefully organized procedure was followed.

In processing an SEP, the Security Forces kept in mind the absolute necessity of keeping his surrender a

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secret from the Communists. Their virtuosity was such that they could conceal the surrender of even a senior communist official for as long as six months. Secrecy began with the surrender itself, which was never referred to as such over the radio or the telephone. Even the word itself was not used but was replaced by code words. If the SEP turned himself in at a police station, he was taken at once to an inner room or to private quarters and put under guard. There he was searched, all his personal property was removed, and a list of all articles found on him was made for transmission to Special Branch.

Meanwhile, the officer in charge of the police station would report the event by telephone to Special Branch. He would also remind his men that they were not to mention the surrender to their families or to the public, and that they would be confined to the station until higher police authority allowed them to go about their business. The officer himself was forbidden to question the SEP and to let him have either food or cigarettes. While at the station, the SEP was allowed only water, but his stay was nearly always brief for Special Branch, upon receiving the call, would at once send a party to take custody of him.

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If a civilian reported to the local police station that a guerrilla wished to give himself up, the officer in charge would immediately telephone Special Branch and, using the proper code words, give brief and guarded details of the case. The civilian had to remain at the station, where the District Special Branch Officer would presently come to pick him up and take whatever action seemed indicated. None of the local police officers and men was permitted to leave the station to accept the surrender.⁴¹

Thus quietly and quickly placed in the hands of Special Branch, the SEP went to the same interrogation center as did the captured prisoner. From this point on, the principle underlying the treatment of both was not to punish but to use them, and, though many SEPs were unquestionably guilty of heinous common-law crimes, none was ever prosecuted. The government, however, thought it inadvisable to promise immunity to surrenderers, lest a precedent be set that might later boomerang, and the policy of not punishing SEPs, therefore, was a tacit one.

⁴¹"Police Operational Instruction" No. 7, District Police Headquarters, Ipoh, January 8, 1958, SECRET.

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The government either employed them or helped them reestablish themselves in private life. As regards the latter possibility, every device of publicity and advertising was used to carry word of it back into the jungle without compromising the safety of the SEP.

At the interrogation center, the captive who talked freely was thereafter regarded as an SEP. He had, in effect, become a witness for the Crown, and was treated accordingly. If he did not talk, then every effort was made to compromise him with the Communist Party. Given the almost paranoid suspicion of the Communists and the fact that even some senior party officials had surrendered, it would not have been difficult to suggest to the guerrillas that the captive had betrayed them. This knowledge could have a persuasive effect on the prisoner. On one occasion, for example, a terrorist of local importance yielded when Special Branch threatened to release him in a town at some distance from his home. This would have suggested to his ex-comrades that he had defected, talked, and been rewarded and turned loose. Lacking any form of cover, he may have believed himself in real danger from the Communists.⁴²

⁴²However, it must be noted that BORS/FE Memo No. 11/54 and 6/55, which examine the reactions of SEPs, do not

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The uncooperative captured guerrilla finally would be treated just as would anyone charged with his particular crimes under English law, and this fate, duly publicized in the press, supplied the stick to be weighed by the prisoner against the various carrots that Special Branch was subtly holding out.

Once at the interrogation center, the ex-guerrilla found that he was not in a torture chamber, nor yet in a welfare center. The third degree was never used. Rather, the interrogators, themselves repentant and convinced ex-Communists, would try genuinely to convince the man of his deep personal error in ever having joined the Communists. Because the interrogators had been trained and experienced Communists and were also men of intelligence, it was thought that they would spot any Communist who was merely feigning defection in order to work his way into the security system, for Special Branch believed that the

suggest fear of reprisal on the part of their subjects. Also, having SEP troupes put on anticommunist skits in villages and address crowds was a widely-used technique, which suggests that such SEPs did not fear assassination. (J.B. Perry Robinson, author of Transformation in Malaya, London, 1956, conducted such SEP troupes about Malaya as an information officer.) On the other hand, Colonel John White of the Australian army, the source for the above-mentioned incident, and John Morton both told the author that compromising a prisoner was a device to make him talk.

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break with communism was so profound an emotional experience that it could not be feigned.

The aim of the interrogation, which was only the first step in the process of using the ex-Communist, was to win the cooperation of the subject. Ultimately, it was hoped, he would be willing to become an agent, or a translator, or an interrogator. For any one of these careers he would then be trained in Special Branch headquarters.⁴³

⁴³Harry Miller, "The Emergency in Malaya," unpublished manuscript in the possession of General Bourne (hereafter, Miller MS), pp. V-5, VI-11, VI-12 (Miller had access to official records in Malaya); interview with Morton.

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IX. EXAMPLES OF THE SEP'S USE

On October 15, 1957, a political worker of the Communist Party, together with five other guerrillas, surrendered in South Perak. He stated that guerrilla units in the state were disheartened and that he believed he could coax them into surrendering. Special Branch thought his offer worth accepting, and he went back into the jungle. Over the next seven months, he brought out 118 guerrillas, including Lo Hon, the communist leader in Pahang, and Fu Tin, the latter's principal subordinate in East Pahang. These surrenders were kept secret until July 9, 1958. Then they were announced, and some seven million leaflets telling of them were scattered over the jungle, so that others might be persuaded to follow suit.

The same forces that were at work in Perak and Pahang operated even at the highest Party levels. In September 1958, a few weeks after the Pahang surrenders had been revealed, the government announced that another 150 guerrillas had given themselves up. These surrenders were the work of Hor Lung, who himself had surrendered the previous April. Hor Lung was then the senior Communist in Malaya, since Party Secretary Chin Peng had established the party's headquarters in the sanctuary of the southern

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Thai jungles. The ability of Special Branch to recruit agents among SEPs, and the very substantial rewards it paid to anyone bringing in a senior party member dead or alive (sometimes by prearrangement with the party member himself), had had a profoundly corrosive effect on the communist organization. Hor Lung had come to fear that his bodyguard would kill him. He could find no reassurance within the party, for the unrelenting pressure of the Security Forces had separated him from his subordinates. He decided to be "self-renewed," as the accepted phrase went, and came out of the jungle on April 5, 1958.

Once in contact with Special Branch, Hor Lung agreed to go back and persuade his friends to surrender. One may assume that Special Branch worked out his itinerary with him and arranged a corresponding suspension of anti-guerrilla operations -- setting up "frozen areas, this was called -- so that he could move about without fear of ambush or a chance encounter with a patrol. In four months' time, Hor Lung brought out 28 officials and 132 rank and file. This series of surrenders was kept secret until the September announcement.⁴⁴

⁴⁴Miller MS, pp. VI-11 to VI-13.

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The surrender of Ah Cheong on May 19, 1958, near Ipoh in Perak State illustrates how the military might be used to react to such an event. The 28th Commonwealth Brigade, which was operating in that area, then had four battalions of infantry, a squadron of the long-range penetration forces (the 22nd Special Air Service Regiment), the guns of the 100th Field Battery, and a flight of light aircraft. The brigade believed that it knew whom it faced by name, unit, and area of operations. Ah Cheong's surrender was thought to make Cheong Chor, the chief Communist in Perak, more vulnerable. Accordingly, two battalions were directed to put intense pressure by patrol and ambush on the Salak/Chemor Armed Work Force and on District Committee member Lau Fong,⁴⁵ so as to keep Cheong Chor west of the main road. While he was thus penned in, the 22nd SAS would pursue him and his headquarters directly and ambush his courier routes. The 1st Battalion of the New Zealand Regiment was told to have one of its companies keep pressure on the East Manong Armed Work Force and put the balance into reserve; a Malay battalion was ordered to search a given area for ten days; and the light

⁴⁵For a description of the communist organization see Sunderland, Army Operations, pp. 72, 86.

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aircraft was to continue with visual reconnaissance, while the artillery had to be prepared to engage targets of opportunity.

The above arrangements were ordered on May 20, the day after Ah Cheong's surrender. By June 4, the soldiers had killed two state committee members and captured a district committee member. The elimination of the former was a most gratifying result, for it left an appreciable gap in the Perak party organization.⁴⁶

One institutionalized use of SEPs was in the Special Operational Volunteer Forces. These were men prepared to operate against their ex-comrades either openly, as uniformed members of the armed forces, or clandestinely. In 1957 they numbered ten platoons, each of one sergeant, two corporals, and twenty-one enlisted men. The platoon leader was a commissioned officer of the police.⁴⁷ As

⁴⁶"Notes on Commander's Conference, May 20 - June 4, 1958," Annex M, "Commander's Diary," 28 Commonwealth Brigade, SECRET.

⁴⁷To an American eye, the Malayan police would appear to have been organized on semimilitary lines. Before the great expansion of the Emergency, the leadership of the police had been an elite group of university graduates, who were termed "officers" as against the "rank and file." Both socially and professionally, the colonial police officer was on a par with officers in the armed forces of the Crown. His status was thus very different from that of the American police officer, a fact that lends significance to the above statement that the platoon was led by a commissioned officer of the police.

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far as possible, these platoons were based territorially and used against selected targets under Special Branch supervision. Experience showed that their usefulness was limited largely to the areas they knew.⁴⁸

⁴⁸Report on 1948-1957, p. 21.

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X. SOME SPECIAL BRANCH OPERATIONS

As noted above, Special Branch on occasion would declare an area "frozen," which meant that operations could not be conducted in it for a stated time. Such an order, which was disseminated by the appropriate war executive committee,⁴⁹ would be binding on both police and army. The purpose was to allow Special Branch agents to move freely.⁵⁰

During Operation JAYA in northern Malaya, in March 1960, Special Branch decided to stage what would appear to be a contact between Security Forces and guerrillas, hoping thereby to cause real guerrillas to betray themselves by making inquiries of loggers and farmers. Accordingly, a team of trackers, pretending that they were acting on Special Branch information, searched the jungle edge.⁵¹ While so doing, they saw three "guerrillas" (in reality, a policeman and two SEPs) and opened fire, whereupon the fake guerrillas escaped to the east. As an

⁴⁹For a description of the system of command and control used in Malaya see Sunderland, Organizing Counter-insurgency, pp. 40-44.

⁵⁰See overlay in "Commander's Diary," 1/3 E. Anglian, December 20, 1959 - January 31, 1960, SECRET. See also the briefing on operations, ibid.

⁵¹For a description of the tracker teams and their work see Sunderland, Army Operations, pp. 199ff.

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appropriate reaction to the contact, another tracker team and a company of infantry were then committed to searching the area. But neither this nor repeated searches of the adjacent areas in the following days revealed any sign of guerrilla movement or presence.⁵²

A more elaborate Special Branch project for the same Operation JAYA suggests the formidable skill in clandestine operations that police intelligence in Malaya had acquired by 1960. The scenario called for three SEPs, two Special Branch officers, and five policemen, including an officer. In the first act, it required the staging of a fake contact between guerrillas and Security Forces. In the second, two small groups dressed as guerrillas would inquire among the people about the party that seemingly had been scattered in the staged contact. Presumably, this would bring forth the local party sympathizers, and the fake guerrillas would then ask the local guerrilla support organization for supplies to replace those lost in the encounter. Once they had established a certain rapport with the local party organization, the actors would claim that their guide had lost his way and would ask to be led to their target area by the local Communists. Throughout, their

⁵²"Commander's Diary," 1/3 E. Anglian, March 1960, SECRET.

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cover story was to be that they were a guerrilla party sent south from Thailand to collect documents and bring selected leaders back to party headquarters in that sanctuary. This would account for their need of a guide and their unfamiliarity with local terrain. (Unfortunately, available records do not reveal whether the project was ever carried out.)⁵³

The fact that the avowed primary aim of operations in Malaya was to further the penetration of the guerrilla movement by Special Branch created certain difficulties in the relations between Special Branch and the military, the more so as Special Branch did not always feel free to confide in the military, whatever its relations may have been with other parts of the police organization. One officer recalled that Special Branch had been a problem to him as a battalion commander by repeatedly having him carry out futile operations as covers for their cherished projects. This caused a lack of faith in Special Branch among the military for which there was no compensation in any results of which he was aware.⁵⁴

⁵³"Operation JAYA--Special Branch Project," Annex F, "Commander's Diary," 28 Commonwealth Brigade, March 1960, SECRET.

⁵⁴Interview with Brigadier David D. M. McGready, London, 1962. Regimental journals occasionally contained

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Though no one probably would deny that there were limits to the extent that Special Branch could confide in battalion commanders, the above comments suggest that troops may come to do less than their best after having had to work in a series of cover operations. The remedy for such a situation might be an educational program that successfully explained to the troops why cover operations are a necessary part of counterinsurgency -- as necessary as the arduous but uneventful patrol -- and how, like patrolling, they must be accepted as part of the day's work.

should be fired at Special Branch along the line that the troops did well even though they were working on Special Branch information.

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XI. INTELLIGENCE REPORTS

Improvements in organization and technique, the resettlement of the Chinese squatters, and increased public confidence all began to bear fruit in 1952 in a growing flow of information to the Security Forces (see Table 2). The improvement can also be found in the Special Branch intelligence reports furnished to the military, which, toward the end of the Emergency, contrasted sharply with those used by the soldiers in the early days. The reports of 1959-1960 illustrate adequate intelligence in guerrilla war, as those of 1949-1951 illustrate bad intelligence.

The infantry battalion in Malaya in the latter years of the Emergency did not, of course, rely solely on intelligence reports to guide it to the enemy. According to one observer, there were two principal sources of intelligence: Special Branch reports and patrolling. Unless it had the help of a recent SEP, Special Branch could give information only on populated areas, and commanders in the jungle therefore depended on patrolling and such ground evidence as footprints in their planning.⁵⁵

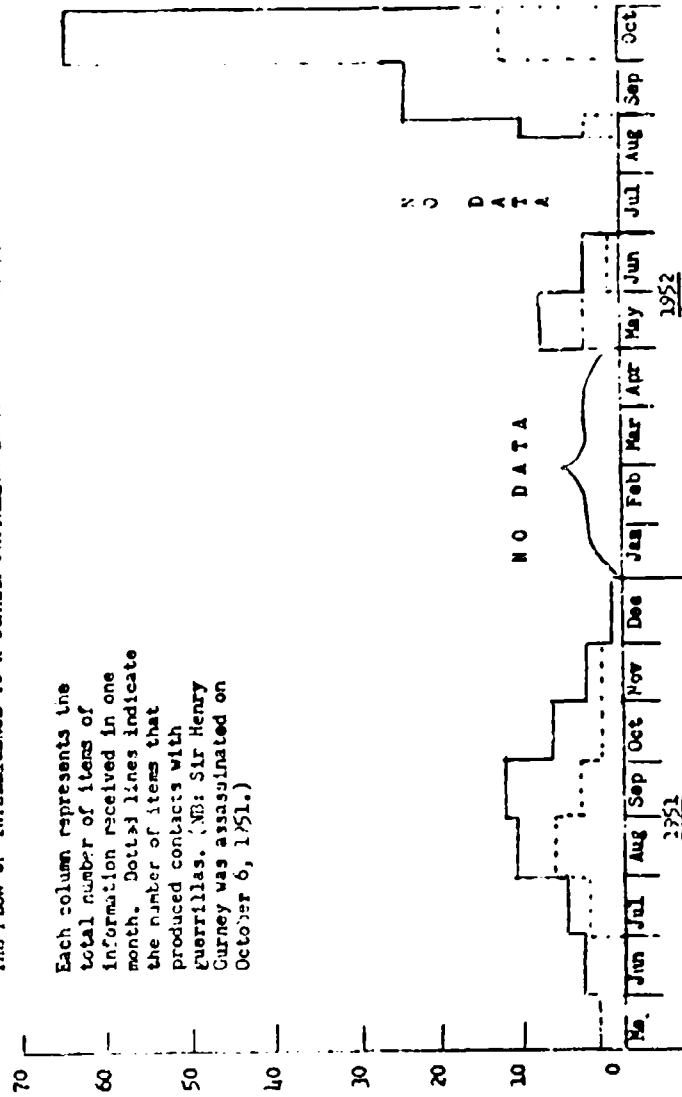
⁵⁵Major R. S. Garland, MC, "Operations in Malaya," The Australian Army Journal, April 1959; for a discussion of patrolling see Sunderland, Army Operations, pp. 182-197.

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Table 2
THE FLOW OF INTELLIGENCE TO A GURKHA BATTALION IN MALAYA IN 1951/52⁵⁶



⁵⁶Based on the war diaries of the 1st Battalion, the 7th Gurkha Rifle Regiment.

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Sooner or later, however, the guerrilla and his supporters had to move to and from places where people lived, and they thereby came within range of Special Branch. This explains why, as noted earlier, Special Branch information ultimately led to the great majority of guerrilla kills or captures.

The format of the Special Branch Weekly Intelligence Summary (ISUM) of the later years mirrored the organization of the communist enemy. Thus, a typical summary for Perak State was divided into two principal parts. Part I had two subheads, one for each of the two guerrilla regiments in the state, the 12th and the 5th. The regiment, in turn, was broken down; for example,

12th Regiment

Lenggong/Grik Communist Party of Malaya District
Selama Communist Party of Malaya Military District
The ASAL (communist aborigine) Organization
6th (Sitrawai/Dindings) Communist Party of Malaya District

Under each of these headings came the latest reports, if any, of the particular communist organization's activity in the area. Part II contained general comment on the intelligence situation, current locations of the Security Forces in Perak, and a summary of psychological warfare.

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The summary was signed by the head of the Perak Special Branch.⁵⁷

In its factual account, the above issue told of the surrender of three guerrillas -- aborigines -- whom it identified by name, unit, and the identification number Special Branch had used for them prior to their surrender. Then came a report from the 2nd Battalion of the New Zealand Regiment that an aborigine, identified by name, had gone to a strong police patrol base in the jungle, one of the so-called "jungle forts," and reported a contact with the guerrillas. The point from which he had come was located to six coordinate figures. The informant said that six guerrillas had visited his hut on February 22 and spent the night there. He named four and described the weapons of five. Special Branch could identify three of the informant's visitors and speculated that one of them, whom it believed to be a district committee member, had entered the area to contact another one of the guerrilla party, whom Special Branch believed to be a branch committee member. The next item of information told of a patrol's sighting two guerrillas at a certain

⁵⁷Perak Weekly ISUM in "Commander's Diary," 28 Commonwealth Brigade, February 29, 1960, SECRET.

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time and place. A tracker team arriving in the area the following day had found nothing. The summary went on to suggest who the two guerrillas might be.

One of the comments in Part II concerned the three aborigines whose surrender had been reported at the beginning; since one of them was a headman who had balanced long and cleverly between the Security Forces and the guerrillas, his surrender was construed as meaning that the guerrillas had left the area.⁵⁸

Analysis of a series of Weekly ISUMs suggests what Special Branch could do over a period of time. For the months July through December 1959, the twenty-five summaries available for Perak State, near the communist sanctuary in Thailand, reported sightings of fifty-nine guerrillas, almost all by members of the public. No fewer than twenty-six of these guerrillas (44% of the total) were identified by name and unit. Fifteen of the twenty-five ISUMs reported ground evidence, such as footprints,

⁵⁸"Surrender" is the Special Branch term, not necessarily that of the aborigine himself. In applying it in a given case, Special Branch had to examine carefully (1) whether the man in question had provided enough food and information to the guerrillas to be numbered among their supporters; (2) the circumstances under which he had given aid, and (3) the measures for dealing with him that would have the best effect on his people.

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camps, and bivouacs. Seventeen gave information on local guerrilla activity.⁵⁹

These figures, and those of two other series of Weekly ISUMs, one in 1959 and one in 1960, suggest that Special Branch had become able to identify roughly one of every two guerrillas who were seen. From March 26 to June 15, 1959, fifteen ISUMs give twenty-three identifications in forty-five sightings, or 51 per cent; in March 1960, five ISUMs give four identifications in seven sightings, or 57 per cent. (Though the latter series is a very small sample, its figures are in line with the 51 and 44 per cent, respectively, in the 1959 series.)

Curiously, reports of guerrilla activity and of ground evidence seem to have fluctuated independently of sightings. March 1960 reported nothing under either heading. The fifteen ISUMs in March-June 1959 have four reports of ground evidence and none of guerrilla activity. This contrasts sharply with the twenty-five reports for July-December, of which seventeen cite activity and fifteen give ground evidence. The explanation for this striking

⁵⁹ Annex C to "Commander's Diary," 28 Commonwealth Brigade, July to December 1959, SECRET.

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increase may be that Special Branch intensified its activity before and during Operation BAMBOO, a major operation that began on November 1, 1959.⁶⁰

If the Weekly ISUMs illustrate the routine flow of intelligence to the military from Special Branch in 1959-1960, the level and quality of available intelligence is suggested by the fact that, for several years before that time, Special Branch claimed to know the great majority of guerrillas in Malaya by name and unit assignment and had a dossier on each man so identified.⁶¹ Although the problems in appraising this claim are formidable, one operation for which extensive records were available would seem to support it. Special Branch had identified 196 guerrillas in the area; when all activity had ceased and restrictions on the public were lifted, the total of guerrillas killed, captured, or surrendered was 222.⁶²

A comment of the 1/3 E. Anglian on the intelligence annex to an operations order in 1960 suggests how much

⁶⁰Perak Weekly ISUMs, 1b12., March 26 - June 15, 1959, and March 1960, SECRET.

⁶¹Interview with Morton; Director's Annual Report, 1956; Report on 1948-1957, pp. 4, 27.

⁶²Annex A to "Commander's Diary," 28 Commonwealth Brigade, January 1 - June 30, 1959, SECRET.

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the soldiers had come to expect by that time. Though the annex listed every local guerrilla by name and unit, it was thought not to be good intelligence, because Special Branch had not had time to introduce agents into the local guerrilla units and thus did not have a clear idea of the latter's movements.⁶³ To appreciate the high standards that prompted such criticism, one need only recall the situation that faced the 1/2 Gurkha Rifles during Operation SICKLE in December 1948 (see pp. 9-10 above).

⁶³"Commander's Diary," 1/3 E. Anglian, 1960, SECRET.

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XII. AN OPERATION TO IMPROVE SPECIAL BRANCH COVERAGE

From October 1959 until March 1960, the 28th Commonwealth Brigade carried out Operation JAYA in Perak State. The available records indicate the roles that the military played and show how the operation looked to the several military headquarters directly involved. Unhappily, the files and documents are still inaccessible that would permit us to reconstruct the role and reactions of Special Branch.

The instructions to the military in preparation for JAYA went beyond those given in the technical manual for counterinsurgency generally used in Malaya; their theme was that every soldier had to be a skilled, thoughtful, alert observer. Thus, if he met and killed any guerrillas, his report on the contact was to go beyond a mere statement of the date, time, place, and number; it was to answer such questions as: How many guerrillas were seen? In which direction were they moving? Were they spread out, or bunched up? How were they dressed? How were they carrying their weapons? What was the type and condition of their arms? How was ammunition carried? What was its quantity and state? Was there a round in the breach? Were any documents found?

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The instructions reminded the soldiers that guerrillas traveling singly or in pairs were probably couriers. Bodies were to be searched carefully (with identification procedure following the technical manual). Packs also were to be checked for documents, and afterward were to be restored to the order in which the guerrillas had kept them, for packs could be helpful in identifying both individuals and units. (This was a change from the days, in 1951, when the 1/7 Gurkha Rifles once burned sixteen packs.)⁶⁴

As for captured documents, bundles were to be kept separate as found. Each was to be wrapped in waterproof material, and a record made of when, where, and how it had been found. All items that might be traceable to an individual were to be given to the police as soon as possible after they had been obtained, with information on: the date, time, and place of seizure; the Security Forces involved; the circumstances in which the articles

⁶⁴"Battalion Standard Operating Procedure, Part II: Information," in "Commander's Diary," 1/3 E. Anglian, December 20, 1959 - January 31, 1960; "Battalion Operational Diary," 1/7 Gurkha Rifles, July 30 - November 30, 1951 (entry for August 20, 1951).

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were taken; and details of any damage or mutilation they had suffered beforehand.⁶⁵

The military were also to help Special Branch appraise the usefulness and accuracy of its sources. When a unit carried out an operation in which an informer, an LEP, or a captured guerrilla acted as a guide, or for which information had come from an ex-guerrilla source, a written report was to be sent to brigade headquarters assessing the value of the information received and summarizing whatever the results. Special Branch was explicit in stating that these reports were intended to help it assess its sources.⁶⁶

So instructed and cautioned, the military began Operation JAYA in late October 1959. Although there had been no contacts with the local guerrillas for a year, some overnight resting places had been found, and Special Branch reported that the guerrillas were there and that they were ununiformed, lightly armed, and well fed (this last fact to be explained by the absence of such local food controls as rationing and central cooking).⁶⁷

⁶⁵"Operational Standing Orders...", 28 Commonwealth Brigade.

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Briefing on South Java in "Commander's Diary," 1/3 E. Anglian, December 20, 1959 - January 31, 1960, SECRET.

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The stated aim of JAYA was to build up Special Branch coverage of the target area. Initially, 216 police⁶⁸ and three rifle companies were committed. While the police were to check loggers and search logging areas, one company each would look for guerrilla traces in the two halves of the 6th District of the Malayan Communist Party, and the third was assigned to the vicinity of Lubok Merbau. All three rifle companies were to search the jungle fringe until about November 15, when the situation would be reviewed in the light of the ground evidence found and the information available from Special Branch.⁶⁹

The three companies set about looking for signs of recent guerrilla presence or passage in their assigned

⁶⁸These were organized as six police special squad groups, each including one officer, three noncoms, and thirty-two special constables. These squad groups were all that remained of the peak strength of 41,312 special constables of 1952. The "specials" were men who had volunteered for full-time paid police duty in the Emergency's early years. Their original mission had been to give point protection, freeing soldiers and trained police for counterinsurgent duties. But their professional skill had been improved to the point where they routinely carried out offensive operations in the field. As more and more guerrillas were eliminated, the special constables were reduced in numbers and gradually returned to civil life, aided by the local equivalent of the GI Bill.

⁶⁹Notes on A/Brigade Commander's Conference in "Commander's Diary," 28 Commonwealth Brigade, October 20, 1959, SECRET.

areas; they would spend ten days in the jungle followed by five days of resting, refitting, and retraining in base.⁷⁰ They found several old, small guerrilla camps, but no new ones and no tracks. There was no contact with guerrillas, though Special Branch twice reported guerrillas approaching Manong village. Both reports were several days old when they reached battalion headquarters, which would suggest a flaw in the transmission system. Artillery fired into the jungle to stir up observable movement, but without visible result.

Not until February 5, 1960, did the soldiers find good, fresh tracks of two people walking together. This suggested a pair of couriers. The response was to fly in a tracker team and set ambushes on known guerrilla courier routes in the north leading to Thailand. Unfortunately, heavy rain promptly washed out the tracks, and no one was caught in the ambushes. Then, on February 12, two men thought to be guerrillas were seen running. The response was to search the area with aborigines, trackers, and dogs. Again, there was nothing to report.

⁷⁰ For a discussion of the means whereby the Commonwealth forces in Malaya maintained the units' combat efficiency see Sunderland, Army Operations, pp. 112-115.

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Patiently and carefully searched, the jungle was not an empty waste. But every small sign had to be interpreted for its possible meaning. Thus, of the sixty-one items reported by the brigade for February 1960, twenty-six were footprints, camps, or other traces of human activity in the jungle. Each of these had to be studied and considered against the pattern of normal life in the jungle and of past guerrilla activity.⁷¹

After about six months of effort that had brought only the smallest indication that guerrillas were present and had provoked no offensive action from them, the central cooking of rice was stopped on March 29, 1960,⁷² and curfew restrictions were moderated. JAYA seemed about to end when, on April 9, Special Branch reported that seven unidentified guerrillas had contacted loggers in the jungle. The 28th Commonwealth Brigade at once made JAYA a priority operation. The 1/3 E. Anglian, which had been conducting it, was reinforced by two rifle companies and

⁷¹"Commander's Diary," 28 Commonwealth Brigade, February 1960, SECRET.

⁷²Since cooked rice spoils quickly in the tropics, the Security Forces in Malaya hit upon the device of ending rice rationing *per se* but insisting that all rice in the area of a food-denial operation be cooked in great central kitchens, where people could buy all they wanted. The usual antismuggling measures remained in force.

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several teams of police specialists. [redacted] were seen again by loggers on April 1 [redacted] intensified ambushing and patrolling. [redacted] 16. an ambush fired on a man carrying a pack [redacted] of the area revealed footprints of three men [redacted] tracks finally disappeared into the jungle. [redacted] while they had been sighted was followed [redacted] but with no result. On May 2 the ambush [redacted] ended.

JAYA ended on June 26, 1960, bec. [redacted] absence of any further sign of guerrilla activity. [redacted] few weeks later, the Emergency itself was declared [redacted] and

Knowledge of how Special Branch [redacted] operation JAYA must await the opening of their records [redacted] significant even now as an illustration [redacted] of the way in which the military can cooperate with [redacted] intelligence to put down guerrillas. [redacted] better [redacted] to [redacted] ambushing of the man with a pack, or [redacted] with the weather, might have made JAYA more [redacted] to the soldiers, but it was not they who were [redacted] to [redacted] Their role in this case was to force the guerrillas, if any were at hand, to leave signs of their presence [redacted] show themselves where Special Branch [redacted] could report them, and in this they seem to have [redacted] [redacted]

⁷³"Commander's Diary," 1/3 E. Angli. [redacted] SECRET.

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